

RURAL DISTRICT OF MERIDEN

ANNUAL REPORT

ON THE

Health of the District

For the Year 1949

— BY —

N. C. MACLEOD, O.B.E., M.B., Ch.B., D.P.H.

Medical Officer of Health

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I, SPRINGFIELD,
COLESHILL.

1st July, 1950.

To the Meriden Rural District Council.

MR. CHAIRMAN, LADIES AND GENTLEMEN,

I submit herewith my report on the health of the district for 1949, together with the report of the Senior Sanitary Inspector.

I think it can be claimed that during the year under review there was an improvement in the health services provided, an improvement which was in no small measure due to the introduction of a scheme of area health administration the previous year. This system is now well established and operating, if I may say so, smoothly and efficiently.

There is the greatest possible co-operation between the health staffs of the district councils and those members of the County health establishment under my control, the result being a joint service which it is a pleasure for me to administer.

N. C. MACLEOD,
Medical Officer of Health.

MERIDEN RURAL DISTRICT

A. EXTRACT FROM VITAL STATISTICS OF THE YEAR

Population (estimated) Mid-year, 1949 ...	...	...	36,160
Birth Rate ...	...	...	18.2
Still Births—Rate per 1,000 total births	...	...	19.5
Death Rate ...	...	...	8.7
Deaths from Diseases and Accidents of Pregnancy and Child-birth	{	From Sepsis ...	Nil
		From other causes ...	1
Death Rate of Infants under one year of age :—			
All Infants per 1,000 live births	...	...	26
Legitimate Infants per 1,000 legitimate live births	...	...	26
Illegitimate Infants per 1,000 illegitimate live births	...	...	30
Deaths from Measles (all ages)	...	...	Nil
Deaths from Whooping Cough (all ages)	...	...	1
Deaths from Diarrhoea (under 2 years of age)	...	...	Nil

Population. The estimated population of 36,160 is 780 greater than that for 1948.

Birth Rate. 18.2 per 1,000 is 2 per 1,000 lower than in 1948 and 4 per 1,000 lower than in 1947 but is still higher than the figure of 16.7 per 1,000 for England and Wales for 1949.

Death Rate. 8.7 per 1,000 is just a little lower than for 1948 and compares favourably with 11.7 per 1,000 for England and Wales.

Table I gives the causes of death from which it will be seen that there were 140 deaths (or 45% of the total) from diseases of the heart and circulatory system and 51 (or 16% of the total) from cancer.

Infantile Mortality. The rate of 26 per 1,000 live births compares favourably with 39 per 1,000 for the previous two years and 32 per 1,000 for England and Wales in 1949.

Statistics for the last few years and also for England and Wales in 1949 are given in Table II.

B. GENERAL PROVISION OF HEALTH SERVICES IN THE DISTRICT

(1) Public Health Officers

There were no changes during the year.

(2) Laboratory Services.

Bacteriological examinations for the year were as follows :-

	<i>Positive.</i>	<i>Negative.</i>	<i>Total.</i>
Diphtheria	1	62	63
Food Poisoning	3	22	25
Tuberculosis	2	40	42
			<hr/>
			130
			<hr/>

The National Public Health Service Laboratory in Coventry is proving of great value in the investigation of disease and increasing use is being made of the facilities it offers by medical practitioners in the district.

C. SANITARY CIRCUMSTANCES OF THE DISTRICT

I. Water Supplies

(1) The supply has been generally satisfactory as regards quality and quantity with the exception of the village of Arley where the limited supply available has been instrumental in holding up a very essential and urgent housing programme. The Council has, of course, taken all possible steps to remedy the position but it will be some time before the proposed scheme for an adequate supply can become operative.

During the year the mains extension to Chadwick End, referred to in last year's report, was completed and small extensions were carried out at Shirley Lane, Green Lane and Hodgetts Lane in Berkswell parish, at Kenilworth Road and Netherwood Lane in the parish of Balsall and at Highfield Lane in the parish of Corley.

(2) No bacteriological or chemical examinations of piped water were made by the Health Department.

- (3) There was no case of plumbo-solvent action.
- (4) Wells from which unsatisfactory samples were obtained were cleansed and resampled but, wherever possible, connections to mains supply were made.
- (5) The Senior Sanitary Inspector's Report, which follows, shows that 79% of houses in the district now have a piped water supply, compared to 78% last year and 74% the year before.

II. *Drainage and Sewerage.*

The large scheme for the re-sewering and provision of a new disposal works at Meriden Village was completed during the year. It is hoped that all property owners in the area served will take full advantage of the modern facilities thus provided by connecting to the sewer at an early date.

An unsatisfactory length of sewer in Hall Walk, Coleshill, was relaid.

Work on a sewerage system and disposal works for parts of the parishes of Balsall and Berkswell started in March.

A public convenience was erected in Coleshill during the year and this deserves mention because it is the first in the district and also because it is an acknowledgement of the necessity for such provision being made. The district of Meriden lies largely between Birmingham and Coventry and its roads carry unusually heavy vehicular and pedestrian traffic, particularly on holidays and at weekends. In the interests of public health, and to help maintain the amenities of the district, it would appear that a public convenience is required in each of the larger villages.

III. *Refuse Collection and Disposal*

In last year's report I referred to the somewhat unsatisfactory system of refuse collection and disposal. While disposal methods have been considerably improved and are now satisfactory, the improvement in collection services is unfortunately not to the extent one would wish. Collection is still somewhat irregular and infrequent. There is naturally some difficulty in obtaining labour for work which is essentially of a heavy and unpleasant nature but nothing less than the Council's agreed eventual target of a weekly collection can be considered as satisfactory.

More than twenty years' public health work in the Tropics has convinced me that, of the large variety of insects with marked anti-human tendencies, the domestic fly is the most dangerous. In this country it has no insect rivals and most inadequate opposition from its victims. Flies carry many infections and control measures against them are manifestly essential in the fight against disease. Such measures must include the humble dustbin and the proper disposal of its contents at the proper time.

Adequate fly control measures would reduce substantially the incidence of such diseases as typhoid, dysentery and food poisoning and perhaps go a long way towards their elimination. There is also reason to believe that such measures would have a beneficial effect on the prevalence of other infections including tuberculosis and poliomyelitis.

IV. *Miscellaneous*

In his report the Senior Sanitary Inspector lists 109 trades carried on in the district in factories (with machinery) but there is one additional trade, which though not conducted in a factory, must unfortunately be mentioned if only as a warning to others. I refer to the breeding on a large scale at two premises of gentles, or maggots, for sale as bait to fishermen. This trade caused considerable trouble during the year and brought much unwanted publicity to the district. These gentles breeding premises, known locally as "maggot factories," have an extremely potent and widespread nuisance value and there can be no doubt that the effluvia from them are prejudicial to the health of people in their immediate vicinity. The odour is unpleasant and clinging as can be expected in the presence of putrefying organic matter, flies are plentiful and countless active maggots, coloured natural, pink and green, complete as offensive a picture as one can imagine.

The Council is taking all measures within its powers to reduce or eradicate this trade which depends for its very existence on putrefaction, a process which should not be allowed to flourish offensively above ground for the financial gain of traders and the gratification of a certain class of fishermen.

D. HOUSING.

Progress in the provision of housing during the year was disappointing with only 66 Council houses completed compared with 264 in 1948. The Council now owns 839 houses and at the end of the year had 1247 applicants on its housing list, of which

some 300 are already tenants of houses they wish to vacate for various reasons.

The shortage of housing and the consequent overcrowding, often in poor and unhealthy premises, constitute the greatest public health problem of the day. There can be no doubt that much physical and mental ill-health, as shown by the prevalence of tuberculosis, general debility, problem families, maladjusted children and general discord and unhappiness, are a direct result of inadequate or unsuitable housing accommodation.

I feel certain that the solution of the housing problem would have a more beneficial effect on the health of the people than all the benefits available from the National Health Service which is, in fact, unlikely to be a real success from a health point of view until adequate housing is provided for all.

The shortage of houses has given rise to the problem of squatters who occupy 26 premises of various kinds throughout the district. Many of these squatters deserve sympathy, living as they do on the fringes of Public Health legislation. They pay rates for minimal services but no rents and their position is unenviable. In order to ensure proper sanitary control over them, it was recommended that the Council accept responsibility for squatter settlements at Fen End, Lea Marston and Balsall but this recommendation was not approved. In the circumstances, the public health problem inherent in the squatter position must continue indefinitely and is more likely to deteriorate than to improve.

E. INSPECTION AND SUPERVISION OF FOOD.

Particulars of action taken with regard to meat and other foods is given in detail in the Sanitary Inspector's report.

There is no Ministry of Food abattoir in the district and the carcasses inspected were therefore those of emergency slaughterings only.

Food Poisoning

Three sporadic cases of food poisoning were notified during the year. *Salmonella typhi-murium* was the causative organism in two cases and *Salmonella thompson* in the third. Despite careful investigation the sources of infection were not discovered.

F. PREVALENCE OF, AND CONTROL OVER, INFECTIOUS DISEASE

Incidence of Commoner Infectious Diseases since 1939.

		Smallpox	Diphtheria	Scarlet Fever	Enteric Fever	Pneumonia	Encephalitis Lethargica	Puerperal Pyrexia
1940	...	—	34	62	2	55	1	7
1941	...	—	60	47	4	73	—	2
1942	...	—	33	55	—	56	—	4
1943	...	—	18	122	2	91	1	3
1944	...	—	16	60	—	51	—	9
1945	...	—	15	35	—	51	—	13
1946	...	—	9	46	2	48	—	5
1947	...	—	10	48	—	58	1	5
1948	...	—	27	78	1	61	—	5
1949	...	—	1	56	—	86	—	5

Diphtheria. There was one case only in a young adult who had not been immunised.

During the year a full course of immunisation against diphtheria was completed by 419 children under 5 years of age and by 114 children between the ages of 5 and 14 years, a total of 533.

In addition 332 children were given a re-inforcing or “booster” dose.

Most of the immunisations were carried out at Welfare Centres and Schools.

Acute Poliomyelitis. There was one case, which ended fatally, in a child under one year of age.

School Closures—NIL.

Table III shows the chief infectious diseases notified during the year together with their age incidence and deaths.

PREVALENCE OF, AND CONTROL OVER, TUBERCULOSIS

Age—Periods.	NEW CASES.				DEATHS.			
	Pulmonary.		Non-Pulmonary.		Pulmonary.		Non-Pulmonary.	
	M.	F.	M.	F.	M.	F.	M.	F.
0	—	—	—	—	—	—	1	—
1	—	—	1	—	—	—	—	—
5	1	—	7	1	—	—	1	—
15	3	2	3	—	1	—	—	—
25	7	4	—	—	1	2	—	—
35	2	4	—	1	—	1	—	—
45	2	3	—	—	1	1	—	—
55	—	—	—	—	1	—	—	—
65 and upwards	—	1	—	—	1	—	—	—
TOTALS	15	14	11	2	5	4	2	—
	==	==	==	==	==	==	==	==

Treatment

Facilities for the treatment of respiratory tuberculosis showed some improvement, 50% of notified cases being admitted to a sanatorium compared to 25% the previous year.

There was no difficulty in obtaining treatment for non-respiratory cases. Housing is still a serious problem but the District Council is sympathetic towards the special requirements of the tuberculous and provides new housing for deserving cases whenever possible.

The coming into operation of the Milk and Dairies Regulations (1949) was welcomed as a step, if a short and tardy one, towards the control of infected milk supplies and the prevention of tuberculosis. At last the Medical Officer of Health has power to order the pasteurisation or sterilisation of infected milk before it can be sold to the public.

The following table shows the incidence of and deaths from Tuberculosis during the last 20 years :-

Tuberculosis

		1930	1931	1932	1933	1934	1935	1936
Cases	...	33	23	21	36	21	35	27
Deaths	...	16	9	5	18	12	16	7
		1937	1938	1939	1940	1941	1942	1943
Cases	...	26	19	54	35	40	36	49
Deaths	...	12	6	17	18	18	19	13
		1944	1945	1946	1947	1948	1949	
Cases	...	51	29	38	42	48	42	
Deaths	...	20	18	9	11	14	11	

FACTORIES

The numbers on the registers are :-

(1) Factories in which sections 1, 2, 3, 4 and 6 of the Factories Act are enforced by the Council—7.

(2) Factories not included in (1) in which section 7 is enforced by the Council—109.

Five sanitary defects were found and remedied.

There were eight other offences against the Act which were put in order.

There were no prosecutions.

REPORT OF THE SENIOR SANITARY INSPECTOR.

*To the Chairman and Members of the
Meriden Rural District Council.*

LADIES AND GENTLEMEN,

I beg to present my report for 1949.

WATER ANALYSIS

Samples were examined by the analyst as follows :-

		<i>Passed</i>	<i>Unsatis- factory</i>	<i>Con- demned</i>	<i>Total</i>
Old wells	....	15	18	13	46
New wells	....	1	—	—	1
Springs	....	4	4	—	8
Bore	....	—	2	—	2
Pool	....	—	2	—	2
		20	26	13	59

FOOD INSPECTION

197 Inspections were made and the following items condemned and surrendered for the reasons stated :-

carcase and organs of lamb, injuries.
do. sheep, jaundice.
do. pig, moribund.
7 lbs beef trimmings, bruised.
17 lbs. bacon, abscess.
296 tins various foods, damaged or blown.
3½ lbs. sultanas, contaminated by paraffin.
68 lbs. cheese, mouldy.
1 cwt. filleted haddock, decomposed.
6 dozen Australian eggs.

Sixteen new registrations were made of premises under section 14 of the Food and Drugs Act, 1938, three for fish-frying and thirteen for ice-cream.

INFECTIOUS DISEASES

Disinfections numbered 52. For scarlet fever 21, meningitis 1, diphtheria 3, tuberculosis deaths 2, removals 19, cancer deaths 2 and dirty houses 4.

NUISANCES

The following were dealt with :-

Accumulation of refuse	....	....	....	....	....	165
Animals so kept	....	....	....	....	....	2
Ashbins dilapidated	....	....	....	....	....	49
Bakehouse, want of limewashing	....	....	....	....	....	1
Cesspools, defective or overflowing	....	....	....	....	....	79
Cesspools, want of	....	....	....	....	....	11
Closets defective	....	....	....	....	....	32
Damp walls	....	....	....	....	....	30
Dirty houses	....	....	....	....	....	5
Drains choked or defective	....	....	....	....	....	109
Foul ditches	....	....	....	....	....	10
Housing repairs	....	....	....	....	....	132
Overcrowding	....	....	....	....	....	2
Pig keeping	....	....	....	....	....	2
Polluted wells	....	....	....	....	....	2
Rainwater conductors defective	....	....	....	....	....	17
Rivers pollution	....	....	....	....	....	1
Roofs defective	....	....	....	....	....	54
Smoke nuisance	....	....	....	....	....	5
Verminous dwelling	....	....	....	....	....	1
Watersupplies, unsatisfactory	....	....	....	....	....	21
Yard paving	....	....	....	....	....	1
Miscellaneous	....	....	....	....	....	2
						<hr/> 733 <hr/>

Ten pail-closets were converted to waterclosets and half-cost paid by the Council.

Control and abatement of nuisances has greatly increased in the last decade, as the people have more and more relied on the department. One hardly ever heard of a choked drain in the district 23 years ago and one wondered whether it was due to the high standard of drain-laying. The answer is that up to that time people had had to fend for themselves and a choked drain was a matter for personal action. Now it means a complaint to the local authority. In 1939 complaints numbered 139 ; in 1949 they were 576.

WATER SUPPLIES

Small extensions of water mains were made at Kenilworth Road and Netherwood Lane, Balsall ; Green Lane and Hodgetts Lane, Berkswell and Highfield Lane, Corley.

The situation throughout the district as to piped water supplies is shown by the following tables :-

<i>Parish</i>				<i>Piped Supplies</i>		<i>Other</i>
	<i>Houses</i>			<i>Birmingham</i>	<i>Coventry</i>	
Allesley	404	—	304	—
Arley	816	—	—	804
Astley	63	—	—	19
Balsall	632	—	243	—
Barston	130	—	87	—
Berkswell	563	—	286	—
Bickenhill	679	618	—	—
Castle Bromwich	1,293	1,263	—	—
Coleshill	1,348	1,176	—	—
Corley	205	—	128	—
Curdworth	130	84	—	—
Fillongley	397	155	—	—
Hampton	342	—	305	—
Keresley	720	—	672	—
Lea Marston	74	32	—	—
Maxstoke	70	—	11	—
Meriden	471	—	398	—
Packingtons	65	—	4	—
Shustoke	142	116	—	—
Water Orton	531	508	—	—
Whitacre, Nether	231	211	—	—
Whitacre, Over	105	63	—	—
Wishaw	49	—	—	—
			9,460	4,226	2,438	823

Total houses in district with piped supplies 7,487
 Percentage 79

Practically all the supplies are direct to houses : very few indeed are by stand-pipes.

ATMOSPHERIC POLLUTION

The use of three deposit gauges and nine lead-peroxide instruments was continued during the year. From the former the average results in tons of total solids deposited per square mile per month were Lea Marston 22.99, Bacon's End 14.23 and Berkswell 10.67. The two last would have been lower and more satisfactory but for a freak result in August.

The highest average sulphur-gases result was from the Whitacre Heath gauge and the lowest, as might be expected, from Berkswell.

RODENT CONTROL

The full-time rat-catcher (who also acts as sanitary assistant for disinfections etc.) operated throughout the year and particulars are given of his work :-

Complaints received	....	....	....	....	....	205
Premises visited	....	....	....	....	....	1,216
Premises baited and poisoned—	Private			....	626	
	Business			....	49	
					—	675
Second treatments	....	....	....	....	....	103
Third treatments	....	....	....	....	....	10
Premises cleared	....	....	....	....	668	
Premises not cleared	....	....	....	....	7	
					—	675
Dead found (rats)	....	....	....	....	....	548

Council refuse tips treated (from August 1949) Packington ; Fivefield Road, Keresley ; Fillongley Road, Meriden ; Hill Top, Arley ; Church Farm, Arley.

Sewage works treated : Meriden ; Furnace End ; Patrick Farm and Marsh Lane, Hampton : New and Old Arley.

FACTORIES

A list of the trades, taken from the factories (with machinery) register is given as a matter of interest :-

Aircraft components	....	....	1
Aircraft maintenance	....	....	1
Armature and coil winding	....		1
Bakers	....	....	10
Bi-metallic contacts	....	....	2
Blacksmith	....	....	1
Boot repairs	....	....	2
Brickmaking	....	....	2
Brace and boot-lace tags	....	....	1
Carnival novelties	....	....	1
Cinema engineering	....	....	1
Coachmaking	....	....	2
Concrete slabs	....	....	3
Coffins	....	....	1
Egg packing	....	....	1
Electricity generating	....	....	2
Engineering	....	....	8
Fertilizers	....	....	1
Firewood	....	....	1
Garden furniture	....	....	1
Gas manufacture	....	....	1
Gauges and gauge recovery	....		1
Instrument making	....	....	1
Joinery	....	....	6
Laundry	....	....	1
Metal pressings	....	....	1
Motor Engineers	....	....	34
Musical toys	....	....	1
Nickel, copper and silver-plating			1
Plastic mouldings	....	....	1
Sawmills	....	....	8
Sheet-metal components	....	....	1
Scrap-metal sorting	....	....	1
Steel and Timber scaffolding	....		1
Tools and gauges	....	....	3
Tractor repairs	....	....	1
Wheelwright	....	....	2
Wireless repairs	....	....	1

NATIONAL ASSISTANCE ACT, 1948

Six burials were done by the local authority during the year under section 50 of this Act.

I am, Ladies and Gentlemen,

Your obedient servant,

F. T. KENYON,

Senior Sanitary Inspector.

Town Hall,
Coleshill,
Birmingham.

5th June, 1950.

TABLE I.
MERIDEN RURAL DISTRICT.

CAUSES OF DEATH DURING THE YEAR, 1949.

CAUSE OF DEATH.					MALES.	FEMALES.
All Causes					158	155
1	Typhoid and Paratyphoid Fevers				—	—
2	Cerebro Spinal Fever				—	—
3	Scarlet Fever				—	—
4	Whooping Cough				1	—
5	Diphtheria				—	—
6	Tuberculosis of Respiratory System				5	4
7	Other Forms of Tuberculosis				2	—
8	Syphilitic Diseases				1	—
9	Influenza				2	4
10	Measles				—	—
11	Ac. Polio-Myel. and Polio-Enceph.				—	1
12	Ac. Infant Enceph.				—	—
13	Cancer of B. Cav. and Oesoph (M) Uterus (F)				3	2
14	Cancer of Stomach and Duod.				3	5
15	Cancer of Breast				—	4
16	Cancer, other Sites				22	12
17	Diabetes				—	1
18	Intra Cran. Vasc. Lesions				17	21
19	Heart Disease				46	40
20	Other Dis. Circ. Sys.				6	10
21	Bronchitis				12	5
22	Pneumonia				7	9
23	Other Resp. Diseases				—	2
24	Ulcer of Stomach and Duod.				—	1
25	Diarrhoea (under 2 years)				—	—
26	Appendicitis				—	—
27	Other Digestive Diseases				2	3
28	Nephritis				4	4
29	Puer. and Post Abort Sepsis				—	—
30	Other Maternal Causes				—	1
31	Premature Birth ...				3	1
32	Con. Mal., Birth Inj., etc.				3	4
33	Suicide				3	4
34	Road Traffic Accident ...				2	1
35	Other Violent Causes				4	6
36	All Other Causes				10	10

TABLE II.
MERIDEN RURAL DISTRICT.
VITAL STATISTICS OF WHOLE DISTRICT DURING 1949 AND PREVIOUS YEARS.

YEAR.	Population estimated to Middle of each Year.	BIRTHS.		NETT DEATHS BELONGING TO THE DISTRICT.			
		Nett.		Under 1 Year of age.		At all ages.	
		Number.	Rate.	Number.	Rate per 1,000 Net Births.	Number	Rate.
1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8
1941	34,210	564	16.5	35	59	377	10.6
1942	34,510	600	17.4	25	42	321	9.3
1943	34,310	667	19.4	30	45	321	9.4
1944	33,870	679	20.0	30	44	337	9.9
1945	33,110	649	19.5	30	46	309	9.3
1946	33,770	631	19.0	41	65	319	9.5
1947	34,800	773	22.2	30	39	348	10.0
1948	35,380	714	20.2	27	39	319	9.0
1949	36,160	656	18.2	17	26	313	8.7

VITAL STATISTICS IN ENGLAND AND WALES, 1949.

ENGLAND AND WALES.

*Birth-rate, Death-rate, and Infantile Mortality during the year 1949.
(Provisional Figures).*

Annual Rate per 1,000 Population.

	Live Births.	Still Births.	Deaths.	Deaths under one year to 1,000 Births.
England and Wales	16.7	0.39	11.7	32
126 Great Towns, including London	18.7	0.47	12.5	37
148 Smaller Towns	18.0	0.40	11.6	30
London	18.5	0.37	12.2	29

TABLE III.
MERIDEN RURAL DISTRICT.

CASES OF INFECTIOUS DISEASE NOTIFIED DURING THE YEAR 1949.

NOTIFIABLE DISEASE.	Number of Cases notified.								Total cases removed. to Hospital.	Total Deaths.
	At all Ages.	At Ages—Years.								
		Under 1.	1 to 5.	5 to 15.	15 to 25.	25 to 45.	45 to 65.	65 and upwards.		
Measles	207	5	118	83		1				
Whooping Cough	174	22	111	40		1				1
Diphtheria (including Membranous Croup)	1				1				1	
Erysipelas	11					2	7	2	1	
Scarlet Fever	56	1	19	32	3	1			21	
Enteric Fever										
Pneumonia	86	1	7	9	4	17	24	24	3	16
Malaria										
Dysentery										
Puerperal Pyrexia	5				4	1			5	
Cerebro-spinal Meningitis	1							1	1	
Poliomyelitis	1	1							1	1
Polio-Encephalitis										
Encephalitis Lethargica										
Ophthalmia Neonatorum	3	3							3	
Chicken Pox	5		2	1	2				2	
Pulmonary Tuberculosis	29			1	5	17	5	1	15	9
Other forms of Tuberculosis	13		1	8	3	1			12	2
Totals ...	592	33	258	174	22	41	36	28	65	29

